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# The “Pattern Theory of Self” Promises a More Humane Approach to Psychiatric Interviews

*Researchers believe that a "pattern theory of self" can lead to more compassionate forms of clinical and research interviewing*

By **Micah Ingle, PhD** - July 12, 2024

In the quest to humanize mental health care, a group of researchers led by phenomenologist Anya Daly has proposed the Pattern Theory of Self (PTS). This innovative theory promises to revolutionize clinical and research practices by embracing a multidimensional understanding of personhood, thus moving beyond the limitations of current diagnostic categories.

**“The current organization of mental health care in terms of discrete diagnostic categories has attracted much criticism from both outside and within the profession of psychiatry. Despite the widely recognized problems with current nosologies, psychiatrists must still ‘workaround’ the deficiencies of the well-entrenched system to protect the interests of their clients and those under their care to ensure access to medications, welfare, insurance, and basic services,” the researchers write.**

**“Nevertheless, there have been recurrent calls for a paradigm shift that would privilege patients experience, focus on dynamic processes, and engage with the context of the patient’s lifeworld.”**

The Pattern Theory of Self (PTS) addresses a significant gap in the psy-disciplines: the failure to account for interpersonal relationships and social and historical contexts. By integrating ten key processes—ranging from bodily and affective processes to narrative and ecological dimensions—PTS offers a framework for understanding individuals in their complexity. This approach challenges the entrenched, reductionist models of mental health care, advocating instead for a nuanced, context-sensitive perspective that honors each person’s unique life story. The researchers argue that PTS can transform both clinical interviews and research methodologies, fostering a more humane and effective mental health practice.

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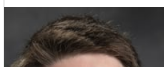

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Micah is part-time faculty in psychology at Point Park University. He holds a Ph.D. in Psychology: Consciousness and Society from the University of West Georgia. His interests include humanistic, critical, and liberation psychologies. He has published work on empathy, individualism, group therapy, and critical masculinities. Micah has served on the executive boards of Division 32 of the American Psychological Association (Society for Humanistic Psychology) as well as Division 24 (Society for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology). His current research focuses on critiques of the western individualizing medical model, as well as cultivating alternatives via humanities-oriented group and community work.